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Islip Town Hall

File photo

Automatic raises for town board approved

Story By: **RICK CHALIFOUX**
3/10/2016

ISLIP TOWN—At the Islip Town Board meeting Tuesday afternoon, the board approved a resolution allotting annual salary hikes for elected officials in tandem with the region's

Consumer Price Index at a rate no higher than 4 percent each year. The measure also consisted of an increase in the town clerk's salary from \$76,800 to \$85,000 for the 2016 fiscal year.

The vote passed by a vote of 3-2, with Supervisor Angie Carpenter and Councilmen John Cochran and Steve Flotteron voting yes. Councilwomen Trish Bergin Weichbrodt and Mary Kate Mullen, on the other hand, voted no.

The vote followed a public hearing in which a few residents gave their views on the matter.

"You, as elected officials, were well aware when you ran what the salary was for the office you hold," said East Islip resident Kathy Ewart. "I recognize you put in many hours, but keep in mind that your part-time position brings in a much higher [annual] salary than many you represent. Many haven't received bonuses since 2008 and are barely getting by paycheck to paycheck. Continue to tough it out like the rest of us. Please do the right thing."

Ewart noted that the timing of the measure was inappropriate, given the projected costs of ongoing cleanup efforts in the wake of the dumping scandal at Roberto Clemente Park in Brentwood.

"This is not the time to bridge the gap [between Islip's and surrounding townships' salaries] by giving yourselves raises," she said. "It would be fiscally irresponsible. People are concerned about the effects [that] the aftermath of the dumping mess at Roberto Clemente Park will have on their taxes. Someone has to pay for this, right?"

Central Islip resident Franz Bacon said he would rather the board instill raises in a more straightforward manner.

"If you want a raise, just vote yourself a raise," said Bacon. "Stand up and say, 'I think I deserve a raise.' This is a backdoor way. It shouldn't be done."

Meanwhile, Bayport resident Lawrence Kelly spoke in favor of the salary increases, noting that it was a necessary move to attract younger prospects to Islip government.

"It's about entrancing young people who'd [otherwise] be moving to participate in Islip," said Kelly, who noted the disparity between board members' and commissioners' salaries. "If you want the best and the brightest to be interested in being town board members, you have to have a salary structure which is at least commensurate with the level of responsibility."

The last time town board members received a raise was a 2.6 salary increase back in

2007. The current annual salaries are \$102,500 for the town supervisor and \$77,200 for board members. This year's CPI is .12 percent, amounting to a \$78 increase per board member starting on Jan. 1, 2017.

Carpenter noted that the raises would narrow the ratio between Islip's salaries and those of other surrounding townships.

"Even with the raise, our town clerk will still be the second-lowest-paid town clerk out of the 10 in Suffolk County," she said.

After the vote, Bergin Weichbrodt said that she would not accept the raise and instead donate the extra money to nonprofit organization Meals on Wheels. Flotteron also noted that he would be donating his extra stipend to Live.Love.Bark Dog Rescue, a subsidiary of the Islip Animal Shelter, while explaining the feasibility of the increase.

"This is for the future," said Flotteron, who noted that the raise amounted to less than the negotiated raises for Islip's blue- and white-collar workers. "I won't even be here to really enjoy this. This is [to ensure] that people in the future in government office [won't be barely compensated]. It's been 10 years since there's been an adjustment.

"This adjustment at \$78 next year is going to be equal to 3 cents an hour," continued Flotteron. "I'm doing this in the theory of good planning. We can't have these ebbs and flows where you don't have raises and then have giant ones. It's not how you manage money. It should be slow and steady."

The next Islip Town Board meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 29 at 2 p.m.

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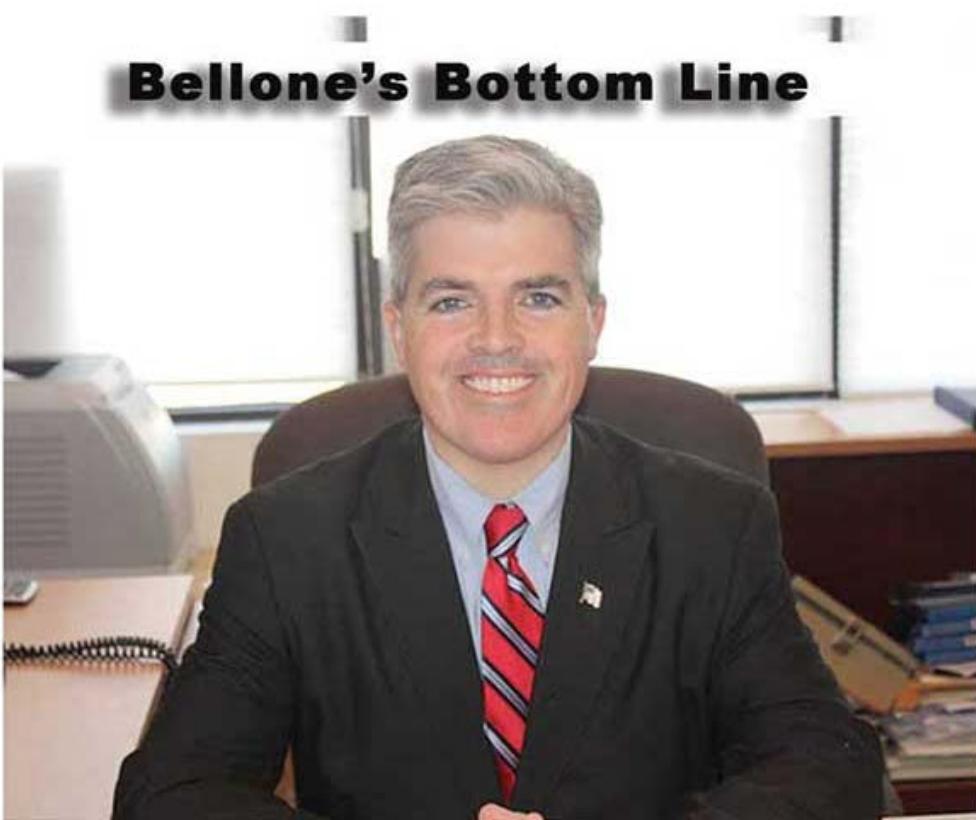


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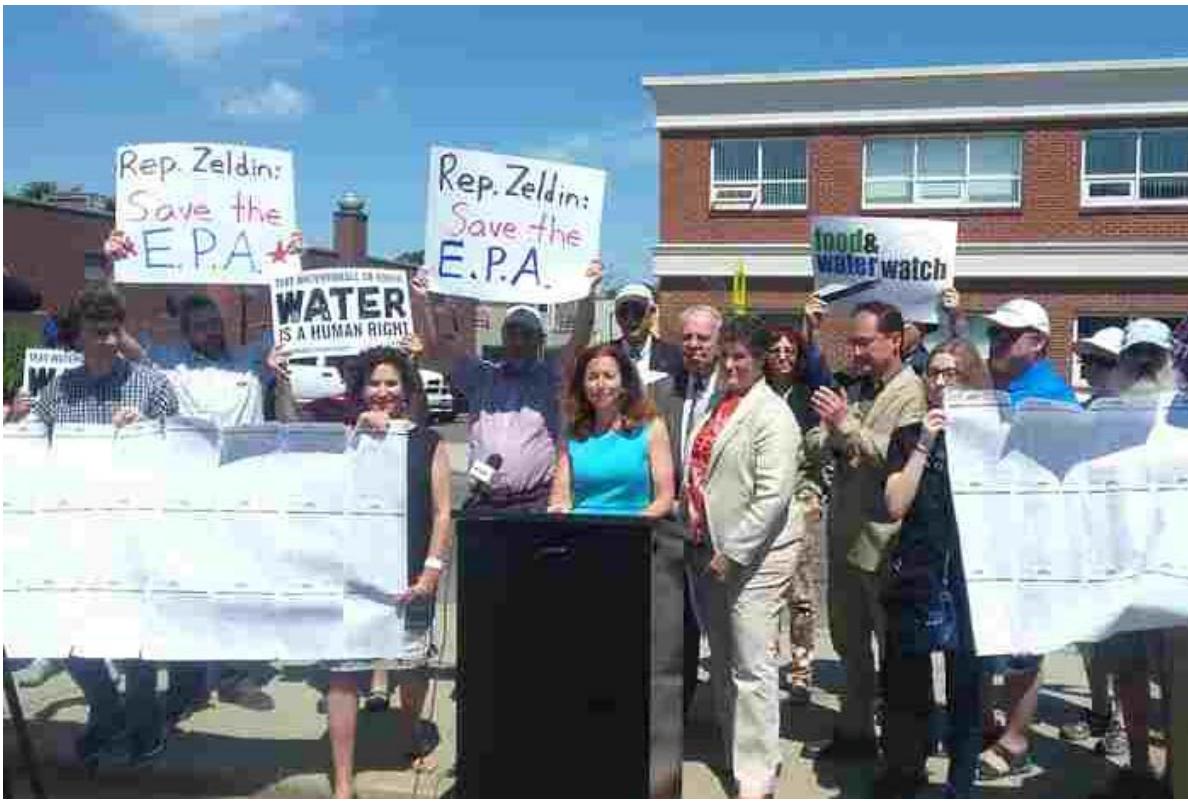
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The Islip Bulletin, which covers the south western portion of Islip Township (Bay Shore, Brightwaters, East Islip, Islip, West Islip, Islip Terrace and Great River) was first published 1948. Due to a fire, details of some of the ownership records were destroyed.

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